"An all-new series that works on all levels." -*Comics Bulletin*

THE PHANTOM™

GHOST WHO WALKS

#5
MOONSTONE™
$3.99

cover A

Mike Bullock
Silvestre Szilagyi

THE PHANTOM™

GHOST WHO WALKS

created by LEE FALK

For those who came in late...

NEARLY 500 YEARS AGO ON A REMOTE BANGALLAN BEACH, ONLY ONE SURVIVED A VICIOUS PIRATE ATTACK.
THE FIRST PHANTOM SWORE A SACRED OATH ON THE SKULL OF HIS FATHER'S KILLER.
...WILL DEVOTE MY LIFE TO THE DESTRUCTION OF PIRACY, GREED, CRUELTY AND INJUSTICE!
GENERATION AFTER GENERATION FOLLOWED, BUT TO THE OUTSIDE WORLD, HE WAS ALWAYS ONE MAN... IMMORTAL.
NOW THE 21ST PHANTOM HAUNTS THE NIGHTMARES OF EVIL MEN EVERYWHERE.

"RETURN OF THE EASTERN DARK" part one

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SPECIAL THANKS TO
OUR PHANTOM CONSULTANT
ED RHOADES

AND TO *KAREN MOY*
AT KING FEATURES

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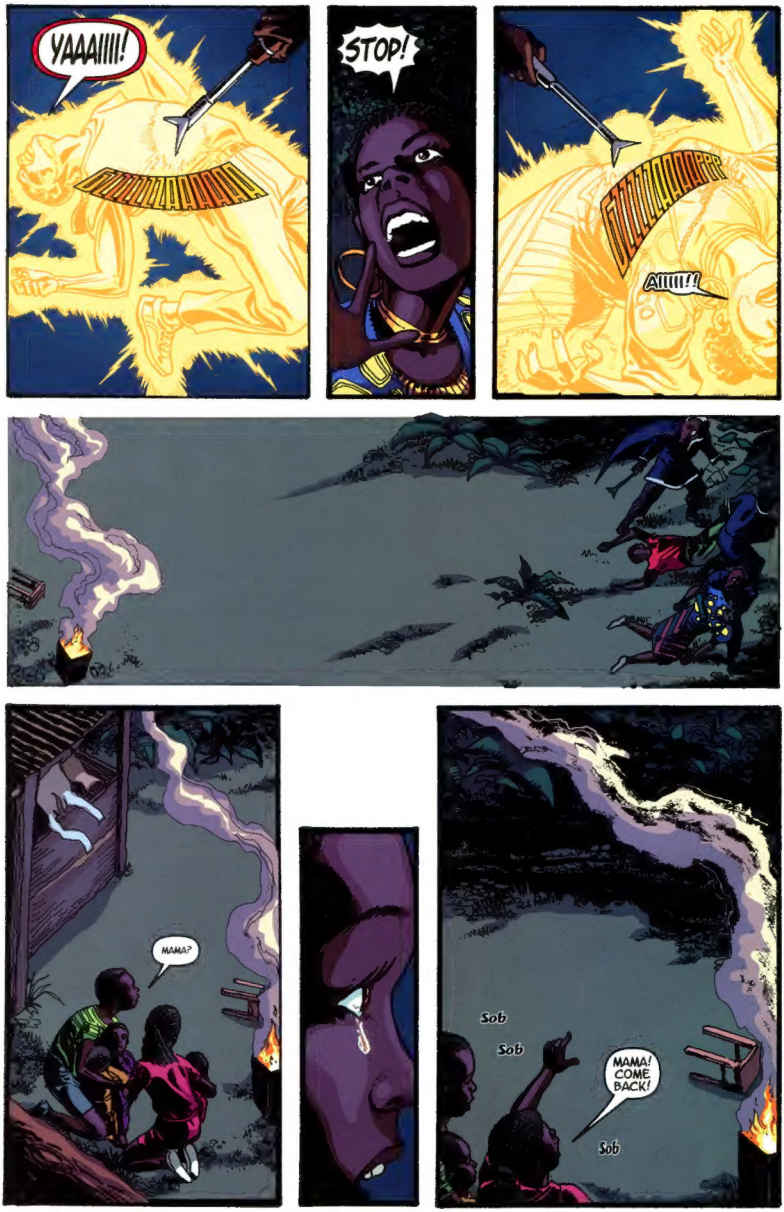
...IT WAS THEN WE LEARNED OF THE WHITE POWDER BUT THE GHOST WHO WALKS KNEW IT WOULD ENSLAVE OUR BROTHERS!
DUNIA! LOOK!
AH-AH-AH -AH-AH

TAKE HIM!

...IF GUTAALE HAD TALKED TO ME LIKE THAT I WOULD HAVE CRACKED HIM RIGHT IN THE-
JUST LIKE YOU FOUGHT OFF THE MAN WHO ROBBED US LAST MONTH?
HA
HA
HA
HA
HA
KR-BASH
YOU HAVE BEEN CHOSEN FOR SACRIFICE!
HA
HA
HA
HA
HA
HA
OBVIOUSLY, THEY'VE PICKED YOU FOR YOUR BRAVERY!
TAKE THEM...

RUN!
HERE, THERE'S A BACK DOOR!
WH-WHAT DO YOU WANT?!
FIND THE BEST SPECIMENS AND TAKE THEM.
MATATA WILL BE PLEASED.

...HIM WAS LIKE THE VERY DEVIL HIMSELF, ALTHOUGH HE TOLD US HE WAS GOD...
BUT FATHER, IF HE WAS THE DEVIL, HOW DID YOU ESCAPE?
I WAS SAVED BY A GHOST...
"A GHOST" INDEED...
WHAT DO YOU WANT?
YOUR BLOOD.


YAAAIIII!
STOP!
AIIIII!!
MAMA?
Sob
Sob
MAMA! COME BACK!
Sob

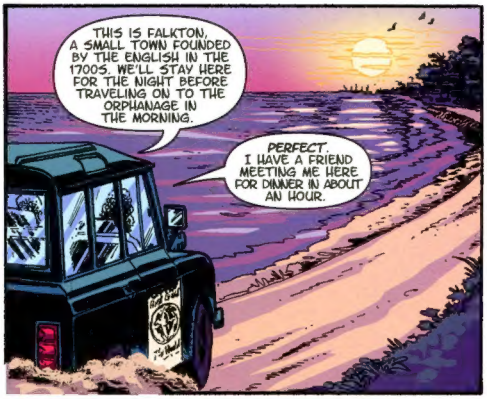
MAWITAAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT WOULD LIKE TO WELCOME YOU TO BANGALLA. WE HOPE YOU HAD A PLEASANT TRIP. PLEASE ENJOY YOUR STAY IN OUR LOVELY COUNTRY.
2

I CAN'T BELIEVE I LET LILY TALK ME INTO COMING BACK HERE.

I TELL YOU, THEY WERE ON THAT FLIGHT BUT THEY NEVER GOT OFF!
WHY DO YOU NOT SEEM TO CARE ABOUT OUR MISSING FAMILY?
WE DO CARE, MADAM, IT'S JUST WE NEED TO VERIFY THEY BOARDED IN MOROCCO BEFORE WE INVESTIGATE FURTHER. NOW ARE YOU SURE-

I'VE HEARD OF THEM LOSING LUGGAGE, BUT NEVER PASSENGERS.

PERFECT TIMING, GENTLEMAN.
MISS SALAMY, I PRESUME?
THE ONE AND ONLY.
Mawitaan Airways
The World of
JAUNE SALAMY


THIS IS FALKTON, A SMALL TOWN FOUNDED BY THE ENGLISH IN THE 1700S. WE'LL STAY HERE FOR THE NIGHT BEFORE TRAVELING ON TO THE ORPHANAGE IN THE MORNING.
PERFECT. I HAVE A FRIEND MEETING ME HERE FOR DINNER IN ABOUT AN HOUR.

GETTING SET UP IN THE HOTEL KILLED FORTY-FIVE MINUTES. HE SHOULD BE HERE PRETTY SOON.
RESTAURANT
BAR

I NEED A TABLE FOR TWO, PLEASE. SOMETHING FACING THE WATER WOULD BE NICE.
...SHE TOLD ME SHE'D BE BACK IN TEN MINUTES, BUT THAT WAS YESTERDAY MORNING.

I DON'T KNOW WHERE ELSE TO LOOK FOR HER...

TWO TIMES IN ONE DAY I HEAR ABOUT MISSING PEOPLE. THAT'S STRANGE...
I'M SORRY, I DIDN'T HEAR YOU.
OH, NOTHING, JUST TALKING TO MYSELF.

YOU DIDN'T PICK THE BEST TIME TO BE A TOURIST IN AFRICA, YOU KNOW.

THAT'S WHY I MAKE SURE TO HAVE GOOD FRIENDS AT EVERY PORT OF CALL.

I REALLY PRAY THIS ISN'T LIKE LAST TIME.
UN FOOD RELIEF
UN FOOD RELIEF
I STILL HAVE NIGHTMARES ABOUT IT.
ZAMULI
I DON'T KNOW IF I CAN EVER REPAY YOU.
YOU DO EVERYDAY, BY NOT GIVING IN TO THEIR FEAR.
I'M PROUD OF YOU FOR COMING BACK AND REDEDICATING YOURSELF TO HELP THE CHILDREN. IT SHOWS WHAT A BIG HEART YOU HAVE
WELL, ENOUGH OF THAT. WHAT'S WITH ALL THIS TALK OF DISAPPEARING TOURISTS?
FUNNY YOU SHOULD ASK. I'VE BEEN CHECKING IN TO THAT FOR THE LAST FEW MONTHS, BUT DON'T HAVE ANY SOLID LEADS YET
THE LATEST I'VE HEARD IS PEOPLE GOING MISSING FROM CRUISE SHIPS. THE SHIPPING LINES ARE CALLING IT "DRUNKEN MISHAPS", BUT I'M NOT BUYING THAT.
SO, YOU THINK THESE ARE ALL CONNECTED SOMEHOW?

I KEEP HEARING RUMBLINGS ABOUT A SLAVERY RING, AND MUCH WORSE
HOW SO?
WELL, THE LATEST RUMORS THAT CAME MY WAY ARE ABOUT YOUNG WOMEN BEING ABDUCTED WHILE DOING CHARITABLE WORK OVER HERE
I'M NOT SURE IF THE CHARITIES ARE INVOLVED OR NOT, BUT I MEAN TO FIND OUT.
WHAT IS IT?
IT LOOKS LIKE WE'VE DRAWN SOME INTEREST FROM THE LOCALS...
Rrrrrrrr
RRAAAAA

DEVIL!

WHAT IS IT, BOY, WHAT'D YOU SEE?

AHHHH!

THE MASK IS A LITTLE ANACHRONISTIC DON'T YOU THINK?

NOW LET GO OF THE LADY OR YOUR NIGHT'S IN FOR A REAL BAD ENDING, FELLA.

MORTAL! DO NOT INTERFERE WITH THE WORK OF THE ANGRY GOD!

SHMACK

UHHH

TAKE HIM!

BZZZUUUT
UHHHNN
BEETA
BAR
BZZZUUUUUUUT
AIIII!
BZZZUUUT
DE-V-
IELLLLL-
THE DOG IS DEAD, LEAVE HIM

WHERE ARE WE?
I'M NOT SURE. WE'RE IN THE BACK OF SOME SORT OF REFRIGERATED TRUCK, BUT WHERE WE'RE GOING IS ANYBODY'S GUESS.
WE'RE HEADING TO OUR DEATHS.
SHUT UP, OLD MAN! IF YOU SAY WE'RE GOING TO DIE ONE MORE TIME--!
PLEASE! DON'T WASTE YOUR ENERGY ON EACH OTHER.
IF THEY WERE GOING TO KILL US, WE'D ALREADY BE DEAD
KEEP YOUR HEAD ABOUT YOU AND WE'LL ALL SURVIVE THIS.
WHAT MAKES YOU SO SURE, WHITE MAN?
HAVE FAITH.

GET THEM READY FOR *PURIFICATION!*
YOUR CHANCE TO APPEASE THE ANGRY GOD IS COMING SOON!
DO NOT TRY TO ESCAPE, FOR THE ANGRY GOD WILL STRIKE YOU DOWN SHOULD YOU MOVE TOO FAR FROM YOUR PLACE OF PURIFICATION.
KRONG
IF THERE'S ONLY TWO SACRIFICES A DAY, I LIKE MY ODDS WITH YOU NEWBIES IN HERE.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "SACRIFICES"?

DON'T YOU KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON HERE? WE'RE ALL TO BE SACRIFICED TO ZAAL, THE GOD OF THE EASTERN DARK!

BUT FIRST, YOU MUST ALL UNDERGO THE PURIFICATION RITUAL.
WHAT'S THE "EASTERN DARK"?

THE EASTERN DARK IS AN ANCIENT CULT. THEY WORSHIP THE ANGRY GOD ZAAL WHO HAS BEEN SLEEPING FOR MANY CENTURIES.

BUT THEY BELIEVE HE IS ANGRY WITH THEM, BECAUSE HE CAN ONLY BE AWAKENED BY HUMAN SACRIFICE.

AND THE WARRIORS OF THE EASTERN DARK HAVE NOT BROUGHT ENOUGH BLOOD TO HIS ALTAR TO OPEN THE PORTAL FROM THE NETHER WORLD TO ALLOW ZAAL TO RETURN TO EARTH IN THE FLESH.

HAVE YOU EVER HEARD OF THIS 'EASTERN DARK' BEFORE?
THEY BELIEVED HIS ETERNAL FIRE WAS STOKED BY THE BLOOD OF HUMANS, SO THEY MADE SURE THAT HIS FIRE NEVER RAN OUT OF FUEL
CENTURIES AGO, THE EASTERN DARK ROSE UP ACROSS ALL OF AFRICA, STEALING MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN FROM THEIR BEDS AND DRAGGING THEM OFF TO THE ALTAR OF ZAAL, WHO AT THE TIME WAS KNOWN AS THE TERROR GOD.
BUT, LEGEND HAS IT THAT THE PHANTOM OVERCAME THEIR WARRIORS...
AND EXTINGUISHED ZAAL'S FIRE.
THEN HE KNOCKED OVER THE STATUE OF ZAAL, TO SHOW THEM ZAAL'S REIGN WAS AT AN END.
THUS EARNING HIM THE NAME "GUARDIAN OF THE EASTERN DARK".

CENTURIES LATER, THEY RESURFACED APPARENTLY UNDER THE NEW EDICT THAT ZAAL WAS NOW THE SLEEPING GOD AND HE WANTED THEM TO SELL ALL THOSE WHO WOULD NOT BOW BEFORE HIM INTO SLAVERY.

WHICH MEANT EVERYONE IN AFRICA WHO WASN'T A PART OF THEIR "RELIGION".

AND THIS SLAVERY HAD WORLDWIDE IMPLICATIONS, SPREADING MEMBERS OF THE TRIBES ALL OVER THE EARTH.

THE LAST TIME THEY WERE SEEN WAS ONLY A FEW YEARS AGO.

WHEN THEY STARTED SELLING HEROIN TO YOUNG MEN, WHICH CREATED A NEW KIND OF CRIME THE JUNGLE HAD NEVER BEFORE SEEN.
WE NEED A FIX! GIVE US YOUR GOLD OR WE'LL BASH IN YOUR SKULL, TOO!

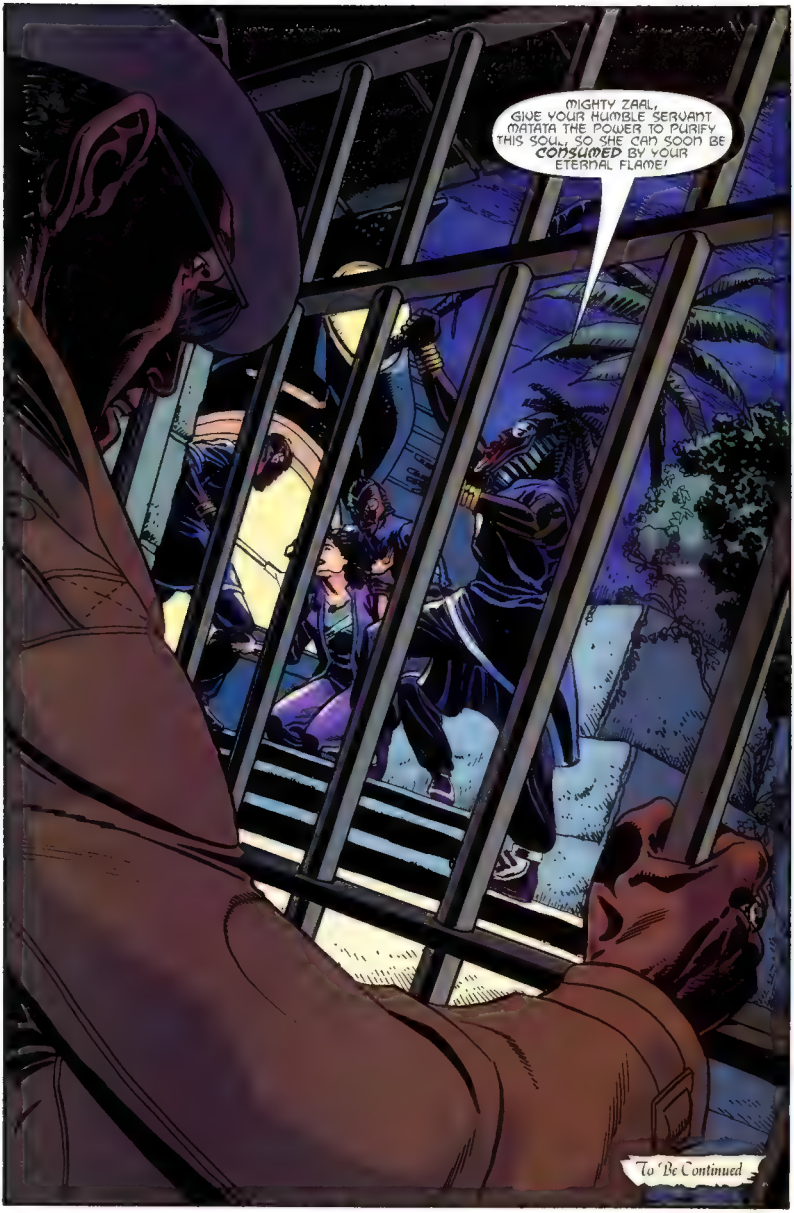
BUT ONCE AGAIN, THE GUARDIAN OF THE EASTERN DARK ENDED THEIR SCHEMES

OR SO THE STORY GOES...

YOUR PHANTOM DIDN'T KNOCK THAT ONE DOWN.
NOT YET, AT LEAST...
THAT IS WHERE WE'RE ALL TO BE PURIFIED.
BEFORE WE DIE ON ZAAL'S ALTAR.

THAT ONE HAS BEEN SUMMONED BY THE ANGRY GOD!
AGAINST THE WALL!
THERE IS THE ONE ZAAL HUNGERS FOR!
YOU HAVE BEEN CHOSEN!
OWW!! LET GO!
PRAY TO ZAAL THAT YOUR LIFE APPEASES HIS HUNGER, FOR IF NOT, YOU WILL SPEND ETERNITY IN RAGING HELLFIRE!
HANDS OFF!

KRAKK
KRUNCH
GZZZZAAAAAKK
UHN
PRAY YOU ARE NEXT TO APPEASE HIS HUNGER, FOR THE LONGER YOU WAIT, THE ANGRIER HE BECOMES!
KRANG
WALKER!
HELP ME!
THE ANGRY GOD IS THE ONLY ONE WHO WILL HEAR YOUR PRAYERS NOW


MIGHTY ZAAL, GIVE YOUR HUMBLE SERVANT MATATA THE POWER TO PURIFY THIS SOUL, SO SHE CAN SOON BE CONSUMED BY YOUR ETERNAL FLAME!
To Be Continued

BEHIND THE MASK

By Ed Rhoades

Music and The Phantom
Coincidental Connections

When I first called legendary Phantom collector Pete Klaus to enlist his help in finding some Phantom material, he said to me. "By the way, my other interest is writing songs, singing and playing guitar."

I replied, "Me too."

At one of the early dinners with Lee Falk, Lee talked to us about our music and reminisced about hanging out with well known jazz musicians. He said he loved music and used to play piano.

Lee's wife Elizabeth's passion was opera which she wrote and directed. For Lee's memorial service, she arranged to have musicians perform Lee's favorite music and for actors to perform his favorite scenes from plays.

I don't remember music playing a big part in many of Lee's stories… but there were occasions like a story called "The Crooner" and one called "The Drummer of Timpani."

His last story, which Elizabeth finished for him, ended up with the Phantom confronting terrorism during an opera. In one Scandinavian story drawn brilliantly by Caesar Spadari, the Phantom portrayed an Elvis Impersonator in order to get backstage. In this adventure, the Phantom actually plays guitar on stage while singing Carl Perkins' 'Blue Suede Shoes.'

Music has also been a part of the lives of other luminaries in the Phantom community. Renowned Phantom artist, Sy Barry and his wife, Simmy also share an appreciation for live and recorded music. I remember being at Sy's home when he got a new computer, and his first concern was setting it up to play his classical music.

DC Phantom artist, Luke McDonnell, keeps a solid body electric guitar in his drawing studio.

The late Andre LeBlanc, Sy's assistant on the Phantom strip, was an accomplished musician. He and I jammed on a Stevie Wonder song … he on his piano and myself on guitar. Once, on my birthday, Andre called me and played happy birthday on his accordion. He also sent me an original drawing he made of the Phantom playing guitar.

Moonstone Phantom writer, Mike Bullock used to sing and play guitar in various heavy metal bands. His career included touring and recording for Restless Records in the early nineties, and sitting solidly in the United States' College Music Top 100 charts for well over a year.

Paramount Phantom actor Billy Zane told me that he sang, played bass and harmonica. I didn't realize how well he sang until I heard his outstanding duet at the end of my daughter's movie, "Pocahontas 2".

When I saw the Paramount Phantom film at the junket, it wasn't due in theatres for another month and the music wasn't quite finished. There was no way of knowing which mixes were complete and which would be changed, but the music performed by the London Metropolitan Orchestra, conducted by Jonathan Rees and written by David Newman was already outstanding. What surprised me a month later at the premiere, was that because of the finished score, the action scenes looked more exciting and the pace was different. The impact of music on a film, TV show, or stage production is immeasurable but of vital importance.

Now, while we wonder about the fate of music for the SyFy (that's how the Science Fiction Channel is referred to now) TV Phantom and the big screen film planned. Do you listen to background music when you read Phantom comics? Maybe you can imagine your own. When the Phantom fights the villains in Mike's stories did you hear the jungle drums pulsing? Close your eyes and let your imagination take over.

The Ghost Who Dies

By

Clay & Susan Griffith

"Then there is another Ghost who Walks!" shouted an accusing voice from the crowd. As it parted, Mutesa's son stalked into position beside his father. Kagame was a predator, a tall lean man with a shaved head to accent his sharp features. Muscular and regal, he was the mirrored reflection of Mutesa when a youth. He carried an assegai, a short stabbing spear, as his baton. His chin lifted defiantly. "Can there be two gods in one jungle?"

"No," the Phantom agreed.

Kagame smirked. "I saw the killer. He moved as you, arising from the shadows."

Chief Mutesa stepped forward. "This requires further discussion. But not here. We shall retire to my boma." His aged eyes swept over his people. Their faces were filled with fear, mistrust, and confusion. It was best to remove the debate from public attention until the truth could be discovered.

Mutesa's enclosure was spacious and surrounded by a wall to keep out prying eyes and hopefully ears. The Phantom stood like a statue near Mutesa's stool with arm's crossed. Insects buzzed in the growing heat of the tropical day. Kagame paced, flicking the assegai from one hand to the other.

The Phantom asked the young prince, "Tell me about Nzige's death?"

"Why?" barked Kagame, boldly staring into the Phantom's blank eyes. "You already know! You were there! You came into Nzige's hut while he slept. You pulled your gun and shot him. The whole village heard the shot! You vanished as you'd come. I saw you go with my own eyes. My father saw you go. I cast you down as the Bangalla's protector!"

"Enough!" Mutesa shouted with a quaver of fear in his voice. He motioned his son back with his chiefly whisk. "You do not dare question the Ghost Who Walks."

"I am not afraid!" Kagame snarled. "Not like you and your fathers! No one is above recrimination. The guilty must be held accountable! If we do not make justice for our people, then how can we deserve to be their chief?"

The Phantom said calmly, "I'm telling you it wasn't me. I will find Nzige's killer. But I

must know more."

Kagame shook with anger. The sincerity, the rawness of the indignation impressed the Phantom. Kagame was wracked with passion for his people, and for his dead friend. It did him credit. But the prince glanced at his father sitting frozen on the chief's stool as if waiting to be struck dead, and he felt pity for the old man. He held his rage in, which did him more credit.

"Kagame, why do you believe Nzige was killed?" the Phantom asked the young man.

"Why is that important? Obviously you thought he warranted death." Kagame's eyes glistened.

The Phantom remained quiet.

Mutesa spoke, "Nzige was a friend of my son's. They grew up together. Please excuse his temperament in this matter, O Ghost Who Walks. He is young. He does not always think clearly."

Kagame swung angrily to his father. "Nzige did nothing wrong! How dare you make excuses to his murderer!"

Mutesa stared into his son's eyes. "I am not blind. I know what Nzige was doing."

Kagame blinked and paused. Then he regained his furor. "It does not warrant murdering him in his own hut!"

"I agree, my son. But the Ghost Who Walks waits patiently for the truth. Let us offer it to him."

"He knows the truth! He was there!"

Chief Mutesa turned back to the Phantom. "Nzige exchanged our ivory to foreigners for guns."

"Guns," the Phantom repeated darkly.

"He was protecting our people!" argued Kagame. "And we do not need to account ourselves. It is our duty and right to protect ourselves! Should the white man be the only one with guns?"

The Phantom rubbed a thumb and forefinger over his chin, where there was a hint of bristle. It had been too long since he had seen to such simple things as shaving. Simple things. He almost smiled.

Chief Mutesa continued, "I don't need Nzige's medicine to know that change is coming. The Europeans gather on the coast and everyday more white men move through our country. Nzige believed that the coming storm would break the Bangalla like a twig unless we acted." The chief regarded the Phantom with sad eyes. "Nzige reached out to the foreigners because he felt he must. To fight fire with fire. He met regularly with those who buy and sell for a living."

"Who are these foreigners?" The Phantom looked pointedly at Kagame. The returned glare was long and menacing.

Mutesa repeated the question sharply to his son. Kagame could not disobey a command from his father, and his chief.

Kagame was petulant with head bowed. "A man named Horn. From Rwalimu, the traders' town downriver."

"Was Nzige meeting Horn soon?"

"Yes. In two days time."

The Phantom said, "I know Horn. Smuggler. But not a murderer."

Kagame muttered, "If he is not a murderer, then it would seem that you did kill Nzige."

"Hmm." The Phantom rolled his sore shoulder. "Well, truth isn't always what it seems. There may be a stranger in the district who could pull off this murder." The Phantom told Mutesa about the recent attack in the forest near Skull Cave. "That man was very wise in my ways."

"So another Ghost was there?" Kagame asked derisively. "Father, are you sure the killer does not stand before you?"

Mutesa regarded his son, now calm and in control. "Yes. I'm sure. There are things in this world we do not understand. We cannot understand. The Ghost Who Walks has explained himself. Why do you still question the way of things?"

"Because we must!" Kagame knelt in front of his father. The glittering blade of the assegai wavered between them like an iron flower. "Our people lose ground every day. Our heritage slips away from us. Please do not tell me you think Nzige deserved to die because he wanted to bring us guns to protect ourselves?"

Mutesa took a deep, halting breath and placed his long fingers over his son's strong hand on the shaft of the assegai. He seemed lost staring at the blade for a long moment, turning the sharp metal in the honeycombed sunlight that filtered through the hut. "Kagame, it is hard for young men to look at an old man and see a lion. But in my youth, I fought like the lion. Many times. The beautiful young girls whispered behind their hands when I passed. I ran endless miles with my regiment. I washed my spear in blood more times that I can remember. I sang so many of the songs of my dead friends on countless nights."

Mutesa released the assegai back to his mesmerized son. Then he swatted a buzzing fly with the lion's tail whisk. "But now, in the comfort of my boma with the company of my wives and the friendship of my son, I find I do not wish to fight. I wish for another way. If only there is one. The Ghost Who Walks has spent centuries watching over the Bangalla. My father trusted him. His father trusted him. And your father trusts him. Why should he choose this time and place to deceive us?"

Silently, Kagame stood and took his place at the right side of his father's stool. Finally it seemed as if the young prince had reluctantly given in to his father and chief.

Chief Mutesa lifted his head regally. "What do you require of us, O Ghost Who Walks?"

"Just your trust, as always. I'll go to the traders' town to find Horn. And I want your son to accompany me."

Kagame murmured, "It is not necessary. I believe you will return."

"That's not the reason I'm asking you to come."

Kagame glanced between his father and the Ghost Who Walks. Why would the Phantom want him to go? Would the Phantom kill him too on a lonely path in the forest? The cold, lifeless face of the Ghost watched him. The assured visage of his father watched him. Kagame was a chief to be. He could show no fear, even though he felt it. He had to be willing to sacrifice his life for the good of the Bangalla. Like Nzige had done. Kagame hardened his gaze and looked at the jungle spirit.

"If you wish it, I will accompany you."

Now the Phantom smiled paternally at Kagame. The young man truly did not understand his role in this, and that was all right. All truths revealed themselves with time.

* * *

Two days later they entered Rwlimu, the trading settlement on the river. The town was alive with activity. Traders bargained in the streets turned into muddy quagmires by the rains. Europeans gathered outside depots, inspecting vast piles of tusks, bales of hides, and large factory floors stacked with bundles of raw rubber. There were endless bolts of cloth and coils of wire. Africans from the surrounding countryside sold produce, handicrafts, and even themselves, eager for work and money to feed the new economy that swept over them. Rwlimu was a slice of the West on the edge of the uncolonized interior, but the most avaricious and lawless slice possible. The Phantom hated to see it come so close to the home he loved.

Kagame, tired and bristly, followed the Phantom as he strode past amazed eyes. Local merchants smiled from behind their stands at the thought of the justice that was coming to some criminal, perhaps someone who had once stolen from them. Elders pointed out the figure in purple to young children; the Ghost Who Walks, they said, if you are bad, he will come for you. Shady figures in discrete conversation

slipped deeper into the shadows and breathed a sigh of relief when the Phantom passed them by.

The ramshackle taphouse was in the middle of town. Typical of Rwlimu, the saloon was the only two-story building in the town. Compared to the stifling moist waves of tropical heat outside, the dark shady air of the interior of the building seemed welcoming. The tavern was filled with unsavory characters, men with hooded eyes, dark expressions, and menacing glares. White. Black. Yellow. Christian. Hindu. Muslim. Pagan. Men from the world over come to Bangalla to wrest fortunes from fate or from the weak. Kagame hesitated; these were not types a chief's son was used to dealing with.

But the Phantom glided through the dark men without fear. To Kagame's amazement the Phantom's mere presence caused numerous chairs to scrape against the dusty floor as men stood and left the relative safety of the taphouse.

Giving them no notice, the Phantom aimed for the long plank of wood that served as a bar. The bartender shifted nervously, but didn't bolt as the god cloaked in purple approached him. In the dim light the bartender couldn't be sure if the Phantom was man or spirit.

The Phantom said, "Still catering to lowlifes, slavers, and gun runners?"

"No! These are legitimate commercial interests here. Ivory. Hides. Rubber."

"I'm looking for Horn. He's selling guns."

The bartender looked appropriately shocked. "What? I…uh…didn't know he was running guns again. He's been here for three, four days, waiting for someone. He's up in Room 8. Take him."

"I intend to." The Phantom turned away from the bar, but then glanced back. "And if you don't clean up, I'll come back and take you too."

As Kagame fell in step, he whispered to the spirit beside him. "If this Horn has been here waiting for days, then your alibi is lost."

"We'll see."

The knock on Room 8 received a muttered "About time!" from inside. As the door opened the Phantom anticipated the bad reaction his presence would have on a guilty conscience. He jammed in a shoulder and pushed through the door sending the man sprawling. The Phantom's pistol was out and pointed at the little man in dirty khaki lying on the floor of the spartan room.

The Phantom said, "Are you reaching for something, Horn?"

"W..wha…what do you want?" The man snarled, his hand caught midway to his own holster. He eased his hand back flat on the floor. "I ain't done nothing."

"I understand you know Nzige, the Bangalla shaman."

"Big deal. I know a lot of natives." He spit on the floor. "I'm very cosmopolitan."

"You're exchanging guns for ivory. Don't bother to lie. I'm in a hurry."

"There's no law against ivory trading. I was giving that witchdoctor a few old muskets. Most of them don't even work. There's no law!"

"My law forbids it," the Phantom said. "You were supposed to meet Nzige today, yes?"

"Yeah, sure." Horn slowly crept to his feet. He kept his hands out. "But he's late."

"He's dead."

Kagame shoved forward. "He was murdered! Did you do it?

TO BE CONTINUED!

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THE PHANTOM

DOUBLE SHOT: KGB NOIR

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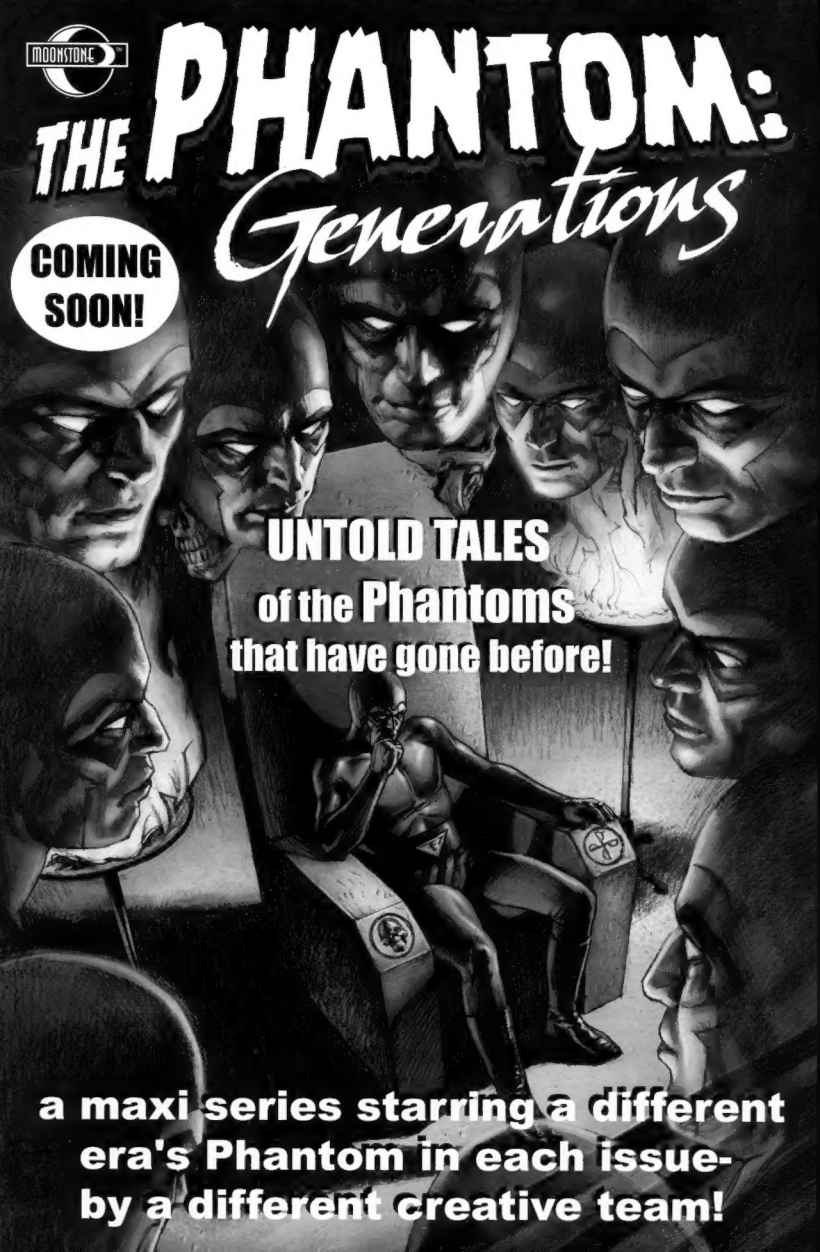
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